Encounters with Spaces of Commoning

Athens

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Why did we go to Greece? Why Athens? To visit the Acropolis, the Agorá, and historical sites, of course! However, there were other reasons that drew, almost hauled, us to this country, to this city and prompted our interest. To begin to explore these reasons, we need to travel back to the year 2010—the 23rd of April, to be precise. On that day, the former Prime Minister of Greece, Giorgos Papandreou, asked the European Union for financial aid. In retrospect, many anticipated this event: Greece's rising debt was no secret. But only then, in 2010, in an effort to avoid national bankruptcy and jeopardisation of the European project, the EU, together with the International Monetary Fund, began supplying Greece with billions of euros in 'aid'. Yet this aid was not simply an act of good will; but was administered under a set of stringent conditions.
In fact, the adverse effects of these austerity measures and comprehensive reform programmes reverberate throughout the country into the present day. Today, as officials in Brussels claim that the Greek economy has since recovered from the crisis, the situation on the ground suggests otherwise. Rampant poverty, insolvent industries, the doubling of an otherwise already high unemployment rate, the decimation of the gross national product (which has fallen by a quarter since 2010), or the exodus of young people seeking jobs and security elsewhere, all reveal how the effects of the crisis are still very much present. Much of these difficulties arose from the social and economic reforms which set out to rescue the economy by reducing the public debt. So goes the rhetoric, at least. However, it meant drastic restructuring and divesting from institutions and sectors: from health and education, to construction and agriculture. With such austerity measures in place, state and citywide services and funding—functions often accepted as a given—were either partially or fully dismantled. The consequence has been serious hardships, breaks, chasms, unexpected cracks and fissures in society at large. The state and its social provisions, once presupposed as a given and naturally reigning the city from above, no longer functioned.

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In this vacuum *other* positions and situations emerged: shortcomings had to be bridged, responsibilities reinvented, existing institutions renegotiated and new ones founded. By describing these responses as 'creative,' the country, especially Athens, discovered their marketing potential. However, only obscuring and reframing the social realities, the emphasis on creativity has neglected the emancipatory potential that these responses hold: self-organisation and the coexistence with *other* institutions.

And yet, it was exactly these social realities behind the image campaigns that we wanted to engage with. There we found emancipatory potential, a sort of hope—if you want to call it such—that drew us in. We wanted to stroll through the different situations and conditions that exist alongside the more externally-controlled political landscape, long preoccupied with selling off of the cultural, natural and national assets. We wanted to discuss other possibilities; visit places in the city that understood 'aiding' not in economic terms, but as a necessary human quality. We wanted to encounter places and spaces that were not the products and articulations of faceless political bodies, but ones directly negotiated among local populations, in neighbourhoods and beyond. We wanted to examine buildings, not those defined by the real estate market, but rather, those which proposed new forms of living and different modes of togetherness.

So for us, Athens is a place that has reacted (and is still reacting) to the demands forcibly induced by external powers from which—perhaps—new and creative programmes emerged. However, the city's importance does not result from its marketability and ultimately commodifiable creativity. Instead, it comes from something else: it is this active search for modes of caring, empathy and other—more responsible—forms of togetherness that we want to highlight. In the end, this is what brought us to Athens.

This publication attempts to trace this very journey. It talks of and documents our explorations and experiences in Athens. It is partial. It is personal. It is extremely subjective.

It covers the intense and extremely emotional encounters with the people we met and places we visited. We cooked. We danced. We walked—a lot! But perhaps most importantly, we listened intently. We came across openness, hospitality, and a sincere desire to share stories—complex ones at that. Many of struggles, sometimes those for basic existence. Throughout our journey, regardless of their exhaustive circumstances, we were stunned by the sheer persistence, raw strength and clarity in which people formulated their principles of solidarity—time and again. Such encounters, in turn, inspired us to look more closely at the spaces of our everyday life: how they are produced, and by whom; how and why trajectories emerge; how disparate ambitions and motivations lead to shared stories.

We would like to thank those who welcomed us into their lives and thoughts with such power: Click and The Mandela Girls who introduced us to some South African Dance moves, Constantina who talked with us about the development of the city, Elli, Nektaria and Athanasia of the neighbourhood initiative of Navarinou Park, Dafni who founded KCH Law Office, Demetra of Big Olive who told us tales of the ancient and modern city, Dorothea of Victoria Square Project, Gigi who was an integral part of the early occupation of Empros Theatre and, with Kostas, is part of the Mavili Collective, Ioannis of the Polykatoikia in Neo Faliro, Keti and Alex of the Social Cultural Centre Byron in Vyronas, Maria and Konstantin of the social polyclinic and pharmacy KIFA, Konstantinos and Yannis of O Allos Anthropos, Stavros of the National Technical University of Athens—and everyone else who we met along the way. Thank you all!

One final note, before you begin paging through the book. While we do credit the individuals who took the photos featured here, we decided not to do so with the various authors: you will not find any names corresponding to the texts. We came to this decision on the basis that these texts could not have been written without the stories and input we gathered along the way. In this sense, we understand them as the result

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of a shared and collective production process. To denominate single authors would have been untrue to this way of doing. This did not happen to deny the responsibility that comes with writing and producing knowledge, but reflects our attempt to restrain from any illusions of individual ownership of words.

From Polis to 大都市*

* *Metropolis* in Modern Standard Chinese

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Our walking tour, guided by Demetra (Big Olive Athens), took us right to the heart of the city's history. In between the two urban cores of the Acropolis and the Agorá, emerged the classical Greek democracy, interlacing that very concept with an urban typology that consists of two main socio-spatial poles: the extra-ordinary (i.e. administration and/or religion) and the ordinary (i.e. urban civic life, commerce, political debate). From the post-antique period, only few architectural ruins have remained, alongside several smaller byzantine churches. It was not until after the 19th century, that the city began to experience a new phase of growth. By the 1920s, the import of Western-European ideals of classicist and historicist urban planning were replaced by a Greek adaptation of modernist planning and architecture in combination with a legal framework that broadened the formation of private ownership in housing. Our walk concluded with a brief observation of the gentrification processes that have transformed the inner city since the 1990s. Against this background, several questions came to mind: What is the current state of the cradle of democracy today, and what will it look like 2500 years later? What opportunities and challenges does Athens' urban development face today? What are the consequences and effects of increased segregation in the city alongside the international privatisation of its public assets?

A pavilion in Central Athens promoting the Golden Visa Scheme in Chinese

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The gate at KCH Law Office

The Greek Lawyer who Speaks Chinese

1

Dafni Korobeli
6 March 2019, 10:00
Aristonikou 18, Mets

"It takes just a flight until the breathtaking Santorini or Mykonos to feel connected to outmost beauty. Now there is now an opportunity to own property in a blessed land with no restraints or extra obligations and the advantage of acquiring the permit to move around the European countries with no visa."[1]

"The Immigration and Social Integration Code (Law 4251/2014, Government Gazette 1, no 80) contains provisions that facilitate the stay of third-country investors, whose investments are characterized as strategic investments, via the provision of extended stay time limits for the representatives of investment bodies and their partners. Moreover, it allows the granting of residence permits to third country nationals and to members of their families, who purchase real estate property in Greece, the value of which exceeds EUR 250,000."[2]

According to a report by Transparency International, a total of 13 countries across Europe—Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal and Spain—are selling citizenship and/or temporary residence permits (we've come to know these schemes as 'Golden Visa' or 'investment-based migration') for investment in their respective countries.[3] The key findings of the report show staggering numbers: since 2008, 6,000 passports and over 100,000 permits were sold for investments commonly ranging between EUR 250,000 (Greece) and EUR 2 million (Cyprus), and more—realising a total of around EUR 25 billion

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in foreign direct investment into the EU, with Spain, Cyprus, Portugal and the UK at the top of the list for that kind of money.[4] Alongside Latvia, Greece is at the lower end of the spectrum when it comes to the cost associated with buying a 5-year residency permit. A 2018 change in Greek law means that this figure can be split into smaller investments: instead of one property, five could be bought at a cost of EUR 50,000 each. And there are plenty of apartments throughout the city that can be had for this price, not least due to the vertical social stratification of the polykatoikia, providing smaller and cheaper apartments in the lower storeys of the buildings.

This scheme, of course, cannot be separated from the broader context of Greece's current socio-economic situation: the country that, since 2010, received several European Union administered economic "bail-out packages"—over EUR 300 billion—which are being paid back, in parts, by selling-off of public assets, organisations and providers; and, the country, that was at the centre of the so-called 'Refugee Crisis' that—since 2013, peaking in 2015, and still on-going—saw over 1 million people from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and many other countries, arrive, pass through, get stuck or deported. And it was especially the latter situation that has caused intense public discussion, tensions and political upheaval revealing immensely diverging positions on migration, the rise of nationalistic tendencies, the porosity (or not) of borders and the role of human empathy.

When heated debates circle around how to deal, politically and socially, with those who arrive on the shores of the European Union, the Golden Visa scheme seems to sit at odds with this while in fact it is representative for a far-reaching and ever-expanding socio-economic inequality that makes it possible for those with enough money to move freely across borders and buy their way in – whilst the same borders remain decidedly closed for others who do not have the means.

It is within this field, that Dafni Korobeli, founder of KCH Law Office with offices in Athens and in Shanghai, China, has carved herself a niche: her office arranges and manages real estate transactions for Chinese investors in Greece. Speaking to her in her offices in the neighbourhood of Mets we delve into the intricacies of the Greek edition of the Golden Visa. Dafni spent many years in China and holds an LLM in Chinese law from Shanghai Jiao Tong University and participated, for example, in the Managers Exchange and Training Programme (METP) that was run by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) together with the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and the European Commission Delegation in China. In 2013, at the time when legislation was implemented to give residence permits in return for investment, "construction had stopped", she says. "The government would call me", she continues, asking her questions about what the Chinese wanted. It was she, who arranged the very first Golden Visa for a Chinese investor.

And yet, the residence permit is but one motivation for those who contact her. After all, it is not only the main investor who benefits. Residence permits—which include free access to the national health service and the education system—are also issued to the investor's spouse, the investor's and the spouse's respective parents and all children up to the age of 21. All for EUR 250,000, a sum investors "stick to" when making their first investment, at least until trust is established between the different parties involved.

To keep the residence permit, the lawyer explains, investors—some of whom are moving to Greece, whilst others don't—will need to demonstrate at the end of a 5-year period, that they've paid their taxes, including health insurance, and have not sold their property. Coming to the end of the first 5-year period since the scheme was introduced, it remains to be seen, she argues, how many initial investors will retain their residence permit. A woman, for example, who's bought a house at the foot of the Acropolis in 2013 under the scheme has decided to realise the additional value the property has accrued over the years and has now sold the building bought for EUR 250,000 for EUR 500,000. Others, however, stay after investing in a country where, according to Dafni, family and good food are as important as in the investors' home country—with the additional value of an environment far less polluted than the one they grew up in.

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For Dafni, the manifold critiques of the Golden Visa scheme seem, if not unwarranted, at the very least less straight forward than they are made out to be. She doesn't say it in such clear terms but when asked about the cost of the scheme to the Greek state, she explains how this external investment has instilled confidence into local businesses and has, in turn, triggered internal investment not only in the construction industry. For Dafni, the scheme is a win-win situation. Because of it, she says, today's "real estate is booming."

1 Adriani Orphanou-Zounali, 'Invest in Greece. Dream House Made Easy', Elegant Travel Greece, 2014, No. 3, pp. 106–7 (p. 106).
2 Enterprise Greece, 'Residence Permits - Enterprise Greece - INVEST & TRADE', 2018 <https://www.enterprisegreece.gov.gr/en/greece-today/living-in-greece/residence-permits> [accessed 17 March 2019].
3 Transparency International and Global Witness, *European Getaway. Inside the Murky World of Golden Visas.* (Berlin / London: Transparency International / Global Witness, 2018), p. 9.
4 Transparency International and Global Witness, p. 3.

Dafni Korobeli on the terrace of her offices in Mets

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City Walk

❷

Demetra Ignatiou
(Big Olive Athens)
7 March 2019, 09:00
Central Athens

View from Anafiotika towards
Mount Lykavittós

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Metropolis. Seat of the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece—dating back to the middle of the 19th century. In its shadow, Panagia Gorgoepikoos—a church from the 13th century displaying spolia from classical antiquity to the Byzantine era.

Royal Guard at the Grave of the Unknown Soldier

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Hellenic Parliament and Grave
of the Unknown Soldier

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Anafiotika—Poster of Anafi, showing the island where the builders for the Plaka neighbourhood came from.

Anafiotika settlement seen from the Acropolis. The cluster of buildings was constructed illegally by workers who came into the city when Athens became the capital of the new nation state. Today, with its winding alleys and white-washed houses it is a tourist destination.

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View from Anafiotika towards
Mount Lykavittós

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Courtyard of the Numismatic Museum of Athens, formerly the house of Heinrich Schliemann

Stoa of Attalos, flanking the Greek Agorá

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Pavilion designed by Dimitris Pikionis as part of the wider landscaping project, which turned a series of barren hills into a lush park that frames the archaeological sites of Filopappou, Acropolis and Pnyx Hill.

Detail of the system of pathways conceived by Pikionis and executed in collaboration with the workers.

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View from the Acropolis
towards the Agorá

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Commoning

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Navarinou Park

Zoodochou Pigis 26
Exarcheia

2
NTUA School of Architecture

Tositsa 2
Polytechneio

3
Social Cultural Center Byron

Mesologgiou 55–61
Vyronas

4
KIFA
Health Centre

Iktinou 2
Omonia

5
O Allos Anthropos

Ermou / Kapnikarea
Church Square
Monastiraki

6
Gigi Argylopoulou

Polytechniou 8
Polytechneio

7
Victoria Square Project

Elpidos 13
Platia Viktorias

8
City Plaza Hotel

Acharnon 78
Platia Viktorias

Commoning
An Introduction

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The School of Architecture is situated within the wider premises of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), a location that holds strong symbolic value in the more recent chapters of Greek democracy. Once the site of the violently suppressed uprising against the military dictatorship on November 17, 1973, it is once again under threat. There we met Stavros Stavrides, co-author of the book *Gemeingut Stadt (City as Commons)* which he published together with Mathias Heyden in the fourth volume of the *Berliner Hefte zur Geschichte und Gegenwart der Stadt* series in 2017. Stavros shared with us his insights into how he applies the concept of commoning in his work as professor of architecture.

The Social Cultural Centre Byron dates back to the collective occupation of municipal property by diverse political activists and residents from the Lampidona neighbourhood. There, anarchists, trade unionists, pensioners and young people, who do not necessarily share political views, explained the necessity of occupying as a reaction to the crisis and to the disappearance of communal care.

Residents and volunteers open the doors of the City Plaza Hotel for the “Re-Sisters” event on the occasion of International Women’s Day 2019. City Plaza, once a derelict hotel, is one of many places organised for and by refugees in Athens.

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Navarinou Park: Stories of Radical Openness and Confrontations with Enclosures

❶

Elli Botonaki and Nektaria Charitaki
6 March 2019, 19:30
Zoodochou Pigis 26, Exarcheia

Navarinou Park is a self-managed park-project, located in the heart of Athens' Exarcheia district. As Elli and Nektaria, who are part of the managing group, tell us the site had been owned by the Technical Chamber of Greece since the 1970s. There were plans for the construction of the Chambers' central offices, but for some reason they were never realised. Since the early 1990s, the empty plot has served as a commercial parking lot. Once the lease for that business ended in 2008 and new construction plans emerged, this caught the eye of the Exarcheia Residents' Initiative. Exarcheia is an especially dense neighbourhood in central Athens, which at the same time has practically no green spaces or playgrounds. The people from the initiative envisioned a place for communal use that could benefit the whole district. To publicise their request to turn the site into a green space, the initiative organised an event together with the collective We, Here and Now, and for Us All.

On March 7, 2009, a considerable number of residents and activists squatted the parking lot, began to break up the asphalt, brought in soil, so that they could begin planting trees and flowers. This self-organised action resulted in Navarinou later becoming officially recognised as a green area. Today, many activities and encounters take place there: from those just enjoying the green surroundings, to kids climbing around

Fruit trees on the former parking lot

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the playground, to neighbourhood-getting-together for performances, discussions and open assemblies on politics, gardening and other subject matter.

Navarinou was always intended to be a self-organised, non-hierarchical and non-commercial project. “A space of emancipation, creativity and solidarity,” we were told. Of course, the complicated composition of its different functions on a relatively small patch of land necessitates respect and tolerance between its various participants, not all of whom are necessarily active in the management and maintenance of the park. Elli and Nektaria mention issues regarding the rubbish, as well as vandalism and theft. But a more substantial worry for them is the park’s use by drug dealers and users. Each of these concerns leaves a mixed impression of the park, which in turn, has steered away some families and seniors. These developments led to placing a fence around the playground—which had been particularly popular for hiding drugs due to its many corners and niches. These more recent enclosures within the park go against the initial intentions of the initiative, but as the two women argue, compromises had to be made.

As the years pass and as the park flourishes, we are told that there is less and less participation in maintaining the park. Only a few people remain, Elli and Nektaria say, who actually feel responsible to regularly keep the park in shape. When we visited, the number had dwindled to just about 15 members. The remaining group meets each week to discuss urgent topics and every Wednesday there is a gathering to clean up the park and to water the flowers.

Navarinou Park—as successful as it has been in reclaiming open space for all—is in need of more local support and care. Elli speaks of the need for an increase in the quality and quantity of green spaces—especially in such dense urban fabric—and thinks that actions are required to minimise pollution, criminal activities and manage drug use in order to attract families and older residents. Whether and how this can be comprised with the radical openness that this park started out with remains to be seen.

Gate to the children’s playground, recently furnished with a lock

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Multi-purpose container conceived by students from the School of Architecture at NTUA

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View from the School of Architecture onto the National Archaeological Museum

Practices of Commoning in Architectural Education

2

Stavros Stavrides
7 March 2019, 17:30
NTUA School of Architecture,
Polytechneio

We meet Stavros Stavrides at the School of Architecture—also known as Polytechnio—in the neighbourhood of Exarcheia to discuss his methods, programmes and briefs for teaching architecture at the university. Stavros is an architect by training and has written numerous articles and books on critical spatial theory, urban struggles and commoning. This connection of critical theory, urban practice and teaching made us curious. We ask ourselves: how can critical urban theory and research be translated and implemented into design processes?

Stavros talks clearly about his roles, responsibilities and interests as a pedagogue, a teacher, a professor at NTUA—also within the wider context of the curriculum. In his view, in his understanding of architecture, the city and space 'form' takes on three levels of meaning. Firstly, there is form as a means of organisation and relation. Secondly, there is form as an expression of value, norms and power. And, thirdly, there is form as materialisation of social conditions. What becomes visible, however, in the course of his talk is a relational understanding of space in which form and function are not the main elements, but social practices, ways and means of organisation and relationships.

He then went on to illustrate these points by showing us works from design studios he taught and co-taught over the course of some years. The examples include designs for single-family houses, as well as social-spatial interventions in social housing and workers' housing estates. The slides from Stavros'

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The social housing scheme on Leoforos Alexandras next to Athens' Supreme Civil and Criminal Court—the site for one of Stavros' design studios

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presentation show floor plans, models and photos that at first do not appear much different from conventional forms of representation in architecture and urban planning. Also the methods of spatial analysis—different mappings, plans, scenario techniques etc.—didn't seem to stand out either. Where, we wondered, are the elements of the relational and processual space that Stavros emphasises again and again in his writing? And, how did those spatial designs and the teaching of it reflect elements of critical urban theory and practice?

It doesn't take long to realise that we—at least the trained architects amongst us—fell foul of the simplest of deceptions the discipline holds out for us. Of course, the 'innovation' (if you want to call it that) doesn't lie in the methods of representing space through sections, elevations, models but in the selection of the projects themselves. Stavros—deliberately, consciously, decisively—shifts attention away from the traditional objects of architectural education and towards other concerns: social housing, precarious neighbourhoods and workers' settlements.

Through various collaborations, he explores with his students and together with neighbours and local actors how living and spatial concepts can be designed in manners and ways that reflect people's desires, whilst at the same time challenging them to think beyond immediate concerns through more collective organisations of space. The underlying imperative of these design processes is, as challenging as it is, fairly straightforward: "Be part of the struggle of the people," he says. The length at which he talks about this, also in relation to concepts of what he calls 'Common Space', makes us realise how much the principles of his teaching are rooted in the ideas around practices as spaces of solidarity and notions of social relations and practices that (re-)produce (common) space.

Of course, more questions emerged after we had left. Some were addressed—at times explicitly, at times implicitly—by the people and initiatives we met during our trip. But, many questions are also still with us, still rumbling around in our own classrooms and university corridors: questions about the spatial qualities of common space or about where to start when

wanting to renegotiate space and architecture in the sense of a practice of solidarity? Much of this, surely, cannot be answered by staying within the safe walls of our traditional educational establishments. Stavros shows ways of how to encounter and, thereby, also provides a sense of security, maybe reassurance, for others working in similar ways; it is ok, his work says, to not-know-where-things-will-end, it is ok to-not-impose, and, he says, working together around shared concerns but without pre-determined outcome can, well, be done. But at the same time, with all that reassurance as back-up, he also reminds us that being open for 'other' discourses and ways of doing is something that we have to practice—again and again and again. Much like we, as architects, practice the drawing of elevations and plans.

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Creating an Other Institution: The Social Cultural Centre Byron

3

Alex and Keti
7 March 2019, 20:30
Mesologgiou 55-61, Vyronas

The Social Cultural Centre Byron (SCCB) is located in a squatted pavilion at Lampidona Park, in the heart of Athens' Vyronas district. Currently the project is exclusively funded by voluntary donations and partly from the bar at SCCB. The pavilion, which once housed a café, was abandoned until 2011, when, as Alex tells us, locals first met to discuss how they could use it for the benefit of the entire community. The idea was to create a space for the neighbourhood to communicate and share, exchange ideas, initiate projects, provide certain forms of education, hold events or simply hangout, chat and have a drink. From this original group of initiators, some have continued to remain until this very today, holding open assemblies about the future and direction of the space.

Since its founding, the centre has experienced a number of obstacles. Whether arriving one day to find the café temporarily shut down by the municipality, or recurring break-ins. Even the district administration has been, at times, a critical opponent of the occupation. But, according to Alex and Keti, it is mainly the right-wing parties that are openly hostile to the activities of the SCCB.

During the first years of the project, it was the district mayor who tried to find an investor for the café, just to have a legal reason to force the occupiers out. But these plans were met with

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a broad outcry from the local community and beyond. Already back then it was clear that not another café was needed in an environment of dwindling public and cultural activities due to austerity politics. And yet, as Alex and Keti explain, there were constant attacks by the administration on the project. At one point, the power to the building was cut in an attempt to make it unusable for the activists. In 2014, with the surprise victory of a left-wing party in the local elections, the conditions for the project ultimately changed for the better as the new administration was more supportive of activism from within the civil society.

Since then, we are told, the SCCB has established itself as an important place for public life in the district. The project's core values include equality, solidarity, multiculturalism (and not philanthropy!—as Alex and Keti emphasise). Furthermore, the centre holds a strong interest in culture, philosophy, science and—of course—politics. With the receding of the state, the SCCB attempts to close some of the gaps left exposed with its wide-ranging programme. There one can find dancing events, yoga, tai chi and cooking classes, among other workshops. Working with teachers and professors, their more academic lectures series draw in people from all over Athens. They also offer training courses on gender emancipation or labour rights and plan political as well as cultural interventions. Performers are generally asked by the SCCB to play for free so that nobody is excluded from attending on the basis of their financial standing.

Alex tells us that the money they earn with the bar is enough to keep the project going and even allowed them to invest in the purchase of technical equipment such as stage lights and amplifiers. It also helps them cover repair costs when necessary. Due to its time-consuming nature, to keep the centre running requires a dedicated team with enough time on their hands. This helps explain why the group has changed over time. Over the years, as the inner circle of organisers has changed, today only a couple of those from the onset are still "in service." Nevertheless, the group is confident to grow with the generations, even if the average age of volunteers, according to Alex and Keti, is a little higher than it was in 2011.

One of the biggest challenges for SCCB, however, seems to be the asymmetric relationship between producer and consumer. Or in other words, those who actively contribute to the running of the centre as opposed to those who simply attend the concerts, workshops and stop by for a cup of coffee. Of course not everyone can be asked to engage with the "inner circle," but sometimes Alex and Keti worry that their work becomes more of a kind of charity than solidarity. Those things aside, though, with strong support and deep roots in the community, there's certainly reason to believe SCCB has a bright future.

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Commoning Where Bottom and Top Meet

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Many projects involving commoning originate from a situation of urgency, as with Social Cultural Centre Byron. In Athens, the erosion of the public sphere propelled people to fight for their right to the city.

Even before the crisis, in Greece and Europe, the concept of common good had mainly been determined top-down, by a set of formal institutions. At the time they sought to maintain it, they also tended to facilitate, knowingly or unknowingly, its demolition, piece by piece. This continued into the financial crisis of 2007/8, after which austerity measures, brought the process to a quick end by dismantling its last remnants.

In the gaps exposed in the crumbling social state, commoners arose: aggregations of individuals of otherwise disparate goals and values who united in the name of a common good. However, as Stavros Stavrides writes, commoning does not presume the bolstering of failed institutions, nor the distribution of care top-down, but the formation of communities based on solidarity.

In Athens, we experienced the spirit of commoning while cooking with members of O Allos Anthropos (The Other Human) in the middle of the main shopping street, eating with whoever was in need of, or just in the right mood, a meal of spicy rice and cabbage. Or while visiting KIFA, a self-organised healthcare centre. There, volunteers and healthcare workers, distribute medicine and offer dental care. Finally, we got immersed in commoning while dancing at the RE-SISTER party which was organised by African Women Organisations in celebration of International Women's Day at City Plaza Hotel. There, refugees and volunteers from all different cultural backgrounds negotiate their living-under-one-roof.

Makeshift bench

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KIFA's waiting room on the 2nd floor of an office building close to the Central Market of Athens

Remaining Faithful to the Hippocratic Oath: KIFA, the Social Polyclinic and Pharmacy

4

Konstantin Kokkosis
8 March 2019, 12:00
Iktinou 2, Omonia

Both the economic crisis of 2007/8 and the so-called European Migrant Crisis of 2015 have had a strong impact on the Greek national health system. As the number of unemployed rose to 2.5 million in 2009, a great number of people suddenly found themselves outside the support of the national health system or could simply not afford the drugs they needed.

In response to these dire circumstances, in 2013, the Free City, a political group based from within the Municipality Board of Athens, founded the Social Polyclinic KIFA in the heart of Athens. Despite its relatively formal foundation, Konstantin Kokkosis, who is responsible for the centre's organisational issues, presents KIFA as an institution that is neither funded by nor tied to the state or any other authorities, and strongly rejects the organisations characterisation as a non-governmental organisation. On the contrary, Konstantin stresses that KIFA depends solely on private contributions by Greek and international donors. Moreover, as he continues to explain, all those who participate in KIFA, including doctors, do so on a voluntary basis.

KIFA followed the example of the other 45 or so social polyclinics that have been established since the beginning of the crisis in 2007. The concept of those polyclinics consists of outpatient treatment with doctors from several professions under one roof. In the case of KIFA, there is also a pharmacy, which

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aside from monetary donations, is supported with unused medications donated by residents from the neighbouring districts.

Konstantin explains how the composition of those who are using the polyclinic's services have changed over the course of the years. In 2013, 60% of the patients had Greek citizenship and were treated in all possible specialisations. The remaining 40% were mainly migrants from the Balkans. Things changed significantly in 2015 when the newly elected Greek government introduced a new national health system covering all Greek citizens, as well as permanent residents and those granted refugee status. However, with the new plan, dental treatments were entirely dropped, and as for undocumented residents, they were entirely denied access to healthcare.

Indeed, with the beginning of the Syrian War, as the ethnicity of non-Greek patients started to change, the number of people not covered by the national health system began to increase. In contrast, KIFA, as Konstantin explains, explicitly pursues "non-discrimination as to nationality, gender, origin or even legalisation of documents." In addition, the clinic's volunteer doctors travel to the 'hotspot areas' in Athens where higher numbers of refugees live. They not only provide physical care, but also have a team of around 15 psychiatrists and psychologists to help people with psychological problems, which often relate to the crisis. Since 2015, about 60% of KIFA's medical transactions address the need of refugees.

Konstantin stresses, that there is still a big need for the services of the social clinics for both Greeks and non-Greeks. In particular dental services, drug supply and medical support for those not covered by the new national health system. These are issues that continue to be addressed and taken on by civil initiatives such as the likes of KIFA.

Cabinet storing donated medical supplies

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The dental treatment room
out-of-hours

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The Other Human
O Allos Anthropos

5

Konstantinos and Yannis
8 March 2019, 13:30
Ermou, Monastiraki

On Friday 8th of March we met with Konstantinos and Yannis of the project O Allos Anthropos – which translates as *The Other Human*. The aim of this initiative is simple: to cook and eat together in public space. Here, the goal is to engage with other people on the spot, regardless of their social status or access to a meal. After cooking, the food is distributed without charge to whomever is interested and eaten together on the spot. Communication and visibility are the main focuses here, satisfying a basic human need, together. One of the long-term goals of this project, we are told, is to mobilise and motivate other people to become activists and start similar projects.

The project was founded by Konstantinos in December 2011, after he lost his job due to the crisis. For him, one of the consequences of unemployment was his inability to secure food. Since he found many others in this same situation, the idea for O Allos Anthropos formed. Cooking in public and spending time together talking, thus creating, even if only temporarily, a common space. Since the project started, a hot meal is being cooked once a day, seven days a week. Everyday, the kitchen travels to different locations within the city of Athens–based on people's need. In the beginning, 50 meals a day were served, but three years later the number of meals has risen to around 200—as during our visit on the 8th of March. How does it work? Volunteers of the project (like us on that day) gather at the O Allos Anthropos headquarters in Kerameikos, a room that is open all day and provides a base for people to meet. There are also hot drinks and snacks. When we arrived, it was packed

Cooking with an oar from a refugee boat

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with people. From there, the group drives the cooking gear to its respective locations, and begins cooking a—mostly—vegetarian meal, before distributing it to people who then lunch together.

The on-going project is made possible by food donations from private persons. Donations from supermarkets or wholesalers are declined, since O Allos Anthropos perceives such as a form of advertisement. Konstantinos says, that the project refuses to be instrumentalised for profit making purposes.

Since donations are incalculable, each new arrival determines which dishes can be cooked in the coming days. In order to cook with a make-shift kitchen in public space, certain equipment is needed (i.e. gas, water, cutlery, aluminium bowls, gasoline, saucepans, spoons and dishes). To help cover these costs, there is a donation box next to the mobile kitchen. During our time with Konstantinos and others from O Allos Anthropos, we noticed how at first mainly volunteers and organisers were active during the cooking. Gradually, however, other people began to participate in the preparations, mixing in the ingredients, with Yannis, the chef, overlooking the process, occasionally adding spices and stirring the soup with a giant cooking spoon. That spoon, Yannis tells us, once was the wooden oar of a boat used by refugees while crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

Helping with the cooking on that day, we noticed how shortly before the food was finished, people began approaching – waiting at a certain distance. Once the food was distributed, some quickly grabbed a portion or two and disappeared. Many stayed and sat down on the low walls that frame Kapnikarea Church on Ermou in the very centre of Athens. When Konstantinos and Yannis gave us a plate, we felt uncomfortable at first. Clearly, there were many who had been waiting for this meal. Konstantinos, however, took away this unease. It's not, he said, about who eats how much or about where he or she comes from, but about doing something together as a public display of solidarity: to cook, share, communicate and eat together.

Serving and eating rice and vegetables on Ermou—a busy street in the central shopping district

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Gigi and Kostas talking about the work of Mavili Collective and their new space on Polytechniou

Confronting and Provoking Contexts of Austerity

6

Gigi Argylopoulou
8 March 2019, 20:00
Polytechniou 8, Polytechneio

We meet Gigi, researcher, artist and activist, and her colleague Kostas in their soon-to-be opened space for cultural activities on Politechniou No. 8. The space is only a stone's throw away from the main campus of the National Technical University of Athens. Gigi describes how an activist cultural scene has emerged against the backdrop of austerity politics since the financial crisis of 2007/2008, and how this scene's work has formed and changed over the years. She has been taking part in various, often, loosely organised collectives and tells us about the different people she has been working with and the specific challenges the individual projects in which she was and still is involved face.

Those, who Gigi works with, come from different professional backgrounds. Their network and interactions formed, she says, in 2010 during a spontaneous meeting at an open square where public discussion took place about cultural policies and the working conditions of artists in Athens. A year later this collective occupied the Empros Theatre in the central district Psyri, which had already been vacant for seven years. The intent back then was not to just occupy the building, as Gigi recalls, but to think about the role of culture and the role of artists during such a severe political and economic crisis. She is critical of how Empros functions today. Back then, she says, there was an experimental spirit that was driven by the desire to find out how such a place could and should work. At that time, Empros offered a broad program of social and cultural activities from morning to evening, addressing very diverse needs and topics,

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offering multifarious perspectives. On the same evening, Gigi says, a prolific academic would give a lecture, followed by a student, an immigrant, an artist. There were contributions by national celebrities as well as locals who would contribute with whatever skills they had. Also the local and national media took part in promoting this model of self-organised cultural life.

Back then, Empros challenged conventional conceptions about how art and culture should present themselves to the public. Its spirit was something special and unique, so Gigi describes, in the sense that it was not organised by an anarchic group that only squatted the building for their own use. Instead, it strived to be something generous and outward, characteristics deeply needed in an already battered city.

However, the heart of the collective, which only consisted of six people at the time, had not prepared to run the place for a long time. But due to the strong public support, it continued for another year until the city administration decided to privatise the theatre. Gigi remembers this as the first time when the collective tried to negotiate with policymakers, arguing that Empros had been producing cultural impact for years without any costs to the Greek state. However, in the wake of those struggles the collective decided there was need for a structural and operational change.

It was decided to hold open assemblies every week that anyone could attend to discuss political, social and cultural matters. Gigi talks about those assemblies as very unstructured, lengthy and messy—but also as processes that fostered diversity and a broad variety in topics. This format continued for around two more years, though in that time, different fractions began forming with strong and opposing opinions about the processes of democratic decision-making. In 2015, the collective that was initially established in 2012, ceased to take part in organising activities at Empros. Some members stayed, others, like Gigi, left.

Gigi has not been idle since. She tells us about other, more directly political actions by the Mavili Collective, in which she participated. Such as the attendance and interruption of a public speech by the former dialogue-avoiding Greek cultural minister

Green Park Café, occupied and activated as a cultural-political centre in 2015, is now closed

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who consistently refused to even acknowledge the artists and activists and their contributions in the cultural landscape at a time when no state-funding was available to support their work. In 2014, they provoked the director of the National Theatre of Greece, who was infusing the theatre's programme with his right-wing ideology. The interventions by the Mavili Collective included posting spoof bills and distributing fake advertisements for plays, to make the shortcomings of the director even more visible.

Gigi is very sceptical about the part that cultural life plays in Greece, especially about the role of privately funded institutions like the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, which gains ever more influence as the state continues to hold out on cultural funding. With the election of Syriza in 2015, a left-wing party who supports bottom-up structures, there was hope for change for the ever-struggling independent, artistic and socio-cultural collectives. Somewhat disappointing, according to Gigi, it nevertheless brought about further activities and actions.

In the process of reassessing their options and positioning in regards to how a cultural space in the city could best work, the Mavili Collective decided to occupy and subsequently transform the Green Park Pavilion located in one of the major public parks in Athens proper: Pedion tou Areos. The building, which like Empros, had been left vacant and in disrepair for several years, was first occupied in June 2015. To activate the space, the group organised a 10-day-long event featuring cultural and political interventions that also served as a means to refurbish the building. After this, the project continued to operate for nearly two years. Gigi expressed how the programme was similar to the initial phase of the Empros Theatre occupation, in that it was diverse in the range of topics and participants and tried to experiment with different approaches on how to create a place for cultural and social discussion.

Ultimately, those expectations the collective voiced in 2015 were not met. According to Gigi, this was in part due to the strict enforcement of austerity policies imposed by the EU, which did not allow the government of Greece to back the otherwise successful project. By 2017, the Green Park was clearly in need of substantial support for its maintenance, furthermore the group was now fighting with possibly malicious power cuts, and restricted water access. Moreover, the city of Athens started to close down the park at night, which made operating the building eventually impossible.

After many a discussions and deliberation, the Mavili Collective decided that a more stable environment was necessary; perhaps a smaller space, which would be less exhausting to operate. It is this new place we had the fortune of visiting. Rented from a private landlord, on the one hand, they currently find themselves in quite a settled and normative position. On the other hand, as Gigi argues, submitting to these circumstances will assure them a consistent and regular basis for hosting lectures, exhibitions and discussions on pressing cultural, social and political topics.

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Attempting to Square Fragmented Circles

7

Dorothea
9 March 2019, 13:00
Elpidos 13, Platia Viktorias

Victoria Square Project is based on the idea of 'Social sculpture', a concept developed by Joseph Beuys in the 1960s. Here, we meet Dorothea–who is currently one of 2 full-time volunteers, organising the project, doing PR and fundraising–and Click, who has been working there since the project's very beginning, being the soul and catalyst of the space, doing knitting classes and generally taking care of the people that come here.

Dorothea tells us, that the project was founded in 2017, in the context of the international art exhibition documenta 14. The curatorial team of documenta asked Rick Lowe, a Houston-based artist and community organiser, to come to Athens and start a project similar to his social sculpture projects in the US, where he has been working for over 20 years.

When Lowe arrived in Athens in 2015, Dorothea says, he learned about the many refugees who had recently moved to the city. Interested in the complex and conflictive nature of the area around Victoria Square, and relating it to an 'Arrival City,' he decided to base his project there. Together with the Greek artist Maria Papadimitriou, the two began working on this social sculpture that was planned to proceed much longer than the exhibition—instead, they intended it to impact the area's social life far into the future.

Before the 1970s, we are told, the area around Victoria Square was regarded as a prosperous neighbourhood. But, as households began resettling in the outlying suburbs, rent prices began to fall, allowing middle and lower income families an opportunity to live closer to the city centre. By the 1980s and

The space in front of Victoria Square Project

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1990s, a first wave of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa began moving into the neighbourhood. More recently, immigrants from Iraq, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and of course refugees from the Syrian War have followed.

With most refugee communities scattered throughout the city, Victoria Square functions as a central meeting point. They come here to connect, to see people that they may know, to figure out what possibilities await them in the city. That's why Rick Lowe, according to Dorothea, felt the need for space where they could interact on a more personal level. To him, it seemed there would be no better way than interacting through shared creative activities. In such a space, people could open up for discussions, build communicational bridges that might potentially extend outside such a space. At least, she says, that was the goal of Victoria Square Project.

The activists at Victoria Square Project want to create a space for different activities, in cooperation with individuals, organisations, initiatives, universities—anyone that would like to work within the community and better understand the neighbourhood and the people. Located on the ground level, in an alley next to the Square, its big windows intentionally create a permeable threshold to the surroundings. It's more inviting for people, less intimidating, thus easier to approach. Different activities are held here, like art exhibitions, knitting classes, language practice, film screenings, festivals, and pop-up events.

Though perhaps somewhat idealistically, Victoria Square Project attempts to be an open space for everyone, not limiting itself to specific groups. A very important aspect for the project is that the space is, generally, free of charge. In our case, we paid a small 'fee' to use it for a presentation, but did so gladly as we knew the money would help—if only a bit—in the funding of the project. So far, Dorothea tells us, the rent, electricity and maintenance costs have been covered by Rick. For a little while, the project was supported with various donations, but more recently it has started to seek more regular sources of funding. With such dependable funding, the project could begin to pursue more long-term plans.

Artist Click Ngwere at her sewing machine

At the moment, Victoria Square Project is open Tuesday through Sunday, and stays closed on Mondays. Besides hosting big events from time to time, the project makes it a point to host regularly occurring activities throughout the week. The balance between something big and exciting, and something more everyday seems important to the project's activists, who are attempting to build a sustainable and lively community: deeper ties can be easily created through routine activities. On the other hand, big events can bring in new people and raise the level of energy. How much this place is part of the community becomes clear on the morning of our visit: while waiting for Dorothea, an elderly man happened to pass by and asks us if we wanted to wait inside. He fumbled while getting the key out of his pocket and let us in. To us this was a fitting illustration of how deeply rooted the Victoria Square Project has already become—not a 'public space' in the legal sense of the term—but a space that belongs to the community.

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The Future of the Polykatoikia Building Type

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Egaleo
Kolonos
Pedion tou Areos
Votanikos
Mount Lykavittós
Alsos Ilision
Acropolis of Athens
Filopappou Hill
First Cemetery of Athens
Vyronas
Kallithea
Neos Kosmos
Faliro Coastal Zone
1
Constantina Theodorou
Victoria Square City Walk
2
Ioannis Saris
Leoforos Irinis Neo Faliro

The *polykatoikia* building type clearly dominates the urban landscape of Athens and many other Greek cities. With the help of Constantina Theodorou (Co-Hab Athens), we immersed ourselves in the polykatoikia's architectural history, from its origins to the current-day attempts to rethink it, its challenges for further urban development, but also its resistance in the wake of real-estate speculation, as well as its potential for new forms of cohabitation. Further talks with artist Ioannis Saris, who currently manages a *polykatoikia*, introduced us to the social and psychological entanglements of this co-propriety, as well as its organisational challenges.

Playground on top of a petrol station amidst a dense neighbourhood of *polykatoikia* buildings

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The Law of Horizontal Ownership: Antiparochi and the Making of the 'Modern' City of Athens

1
Constantina Theodorou
9 March 2019, 10:00
City Walk, Platia Viktorias

Constantina is a trained architect and architectural theorist based in Athens. We met her at Victoria Square Project where she shared her insights on the architectural history of the *polykatoikia*—which she positions within a much broader context of city-planning—along with tracing the trajectories of domestic life in Athens.

Despite its fame as the cradle of democracy and its famous landmarks, we learned that Athens is a relatively young city. This more recent history began with the founding of the nation state and the relocation of its capital from Nafplio to Athens in 1834. Around this time, the royal residence of the Kingdom of Greece was also positioned in Athens, which was a mere village in between ancient ruins and widespread wilderness. It was here, where the German architects Eduard Schaubert and Leo von Klenze were appointed by the Royal House in the early 1830s to change this. But their vision for a regular town plan interspersed with lines of sight and monumental squares was never fully realised—though the partially implemented plan can still be seen in the abrupt changes between the old, narrow alleyways of pre-capital Athens and the planned grid from Thissio in the west to the temple of Zeus in the southeast.

The red-light district actually displays white lights

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Whilst this pattern of the city still determines the general layout of Athens, it was the end of the Greco-Turkish War in 1922, which laid the groundwork for 'modern' Athens. Constantina mentions how in this time Greeks exiled from Asia Minor doubled the population of the city within a month. In light of this, buildings were needed to house those arriving. Much of construction during that time (mainly self-built, small scale, and one to two storeys) happened outside any legal frameworks—though much of this flurry of activity would later become legalised.

Responding to this situation, Constantina recalls the 1929 'Law of Horizontal Ownership,' which began to regulate property and ownership along new lines, which—in many ways—is still practiced in the present moment and therefore remains an important reference point for us today. This law stipulates that property could be owned on a floor-by-floor basis. The land, however, on which those multiple horizontal layers were built, was to be distributed as a share of the precise percentage of a floor plate.

What exactly this meant for the city of Athens became clear following the Greek Civil War (1946–1949), which ushered in a period of massive construction and reconstruction efforts. The Athens we recognise today emerged between the 1950s and the 1980s. Then, many of the one to two storey houses that had been built in the aftermath of the Greco-Turkish War were torn down and replaced by higher, denser apartment complexes. This, as Constantina explained, was when the *antiparochi* was first implemented—offering a way for those who owned a plot of land, but did not have the financial means to build a new house, to receive one regardless. Here, a deal would be made between the original landowner and a construction company which would sign over the land in exchange for one of the new flats that would be built there—a transaction free from taxation. Once such an undertaking was completed, the 1929 law would kick in. The construction company would then return a percentage of the share of land to the original landowner and sell the remaining apartments—making a healthy return in the process. In its time, horizontal ownership, alongside the

A *polykatoikia* with typcial set-backs

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Typical Athenian elevation

antiparochi system, allowed for the fast and straightforward construction of housing, which had been so desperately needed. Nevertheless, Constantina was also cautious of such grand statements, remarking how the combination also meant that the Greek administration itself, did not invest in social housing—an issue which is understood as one of the biggest problems today.

Constantina keenly points out that the current housing situation—and its lack of social- and affordable housing—was exacerbated by the high inner-city vacancy rate in the 1990s, as well as the taxation of the *antiparochi* system in 2007, which had only accelerated in the years following the economic crisis. Here, one thing led to another: the 'emptiness' combined with the 'cheapness' of space allowed those with money to buy up property—not for their own use, but, for tourists, Airbnb rentals, and the like. This in turn, has led to a shortage of housing and the relative price hikes of properties—making housing even more unaffordable in the process. More recently, in an effort to counter these trends, new housing models have been emerging—models based in mutuality and solidarity—but alas, they are still too far and few between.

How will things continue in this city? It is difficult to tell. In the thrall of austerity politics, the Greek state continues to sell off all that it still owns in order to meet its obligations–ranging from entire islands, airports, harbors, to the smallest apartments.

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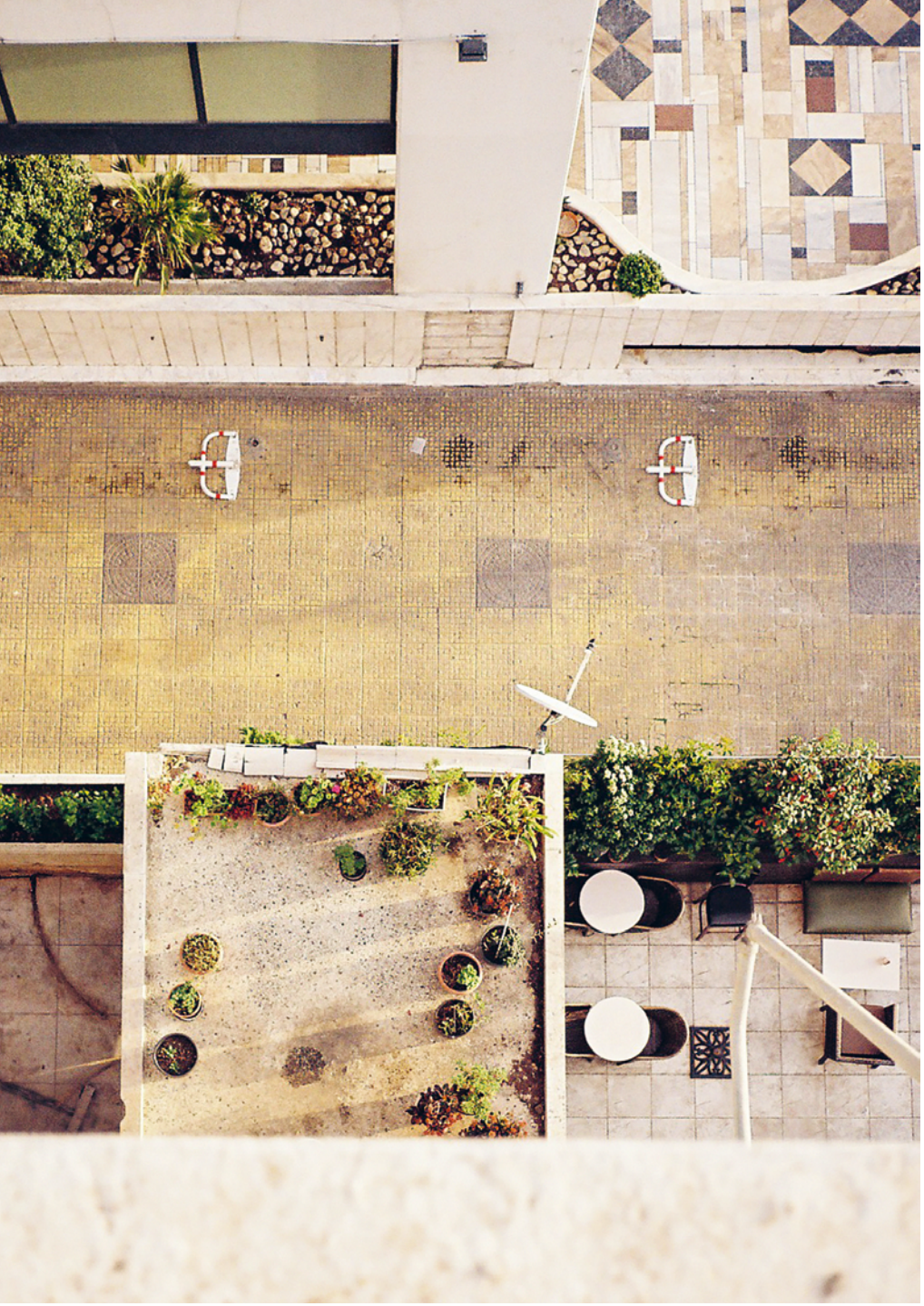

View from Ioannis' building onto the terrace of the ground floor café

Managing Co-Habitation: Ioannis Saris and His Polykatoikia Building in Neo Faliro

2

Ioannis Saris
9 March 2019, 17:30
Leoforos Irinis, Neo Faliro

Ioannis introduces himself as both an artist and philosopher. But for a year now, he has also been a voluntary manager of an apartment building. The 1968 *polykatoikia* building had originally been developed by the Greek National Bank in Neo Faliro, a coastal suburb of Pireos. Aside from the street-side café, there are 27 apartment units in the building, which range in size from 29 to 50m^2. Most of them, as is usually the case with *polykatoikia*, are inhabited by their owners, however some units are rented out for around EUR 250 and EUR 350 per month.

Ioannis also lives in the building. He took over an apartment on the third floor from his grandmother, who lived there before him. Since moving in, and taking over the job as manger, he has been trying to create a community where individual residents live together, rather than just existing side by side. "It's an art project," he declares—while also using this line to secretly justify this work to himself.

This art project includes him as the self-declared manager, and, in that capacity, has him collect money from residents that goes into a shared pot; deal with all sorts of problems and complaints; and organise regular assemblies for residents when decisions are to be made regarding the building. His ideas, he says, are not always welcome by all. One reason that might explain this scepticism towards his voluntary motivations might

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have to do with the behaviour of the previous manager: relationships used to be confrontational and collective money was misappropriated. This, in turn, led to mistrust when it came to paying one's share into the collective fund. Ioannis remarks how this sense of money being there for the 'common good' had been lost.

Many stories are told, many tales recounted and many accounts given during our visit to Neo Faliro. One story is about a man, one of the current residents who has attacked Ioannis several times – dissatisfied with his zest for action. Another story depicts Ioannis' attempts to refurbish the building façade, which when we visited, looked to be on the brink of collapse. He also recalls a story about a common space he wants to realise on the rooftop of the building, which has a beautiful view overlooking the sea. And then, there is his desire for fostering a sense of community by creating equitable conditions among the individual tenants.

One of the stories that caught our attention was about the café located on ground level of the building. It has expanded substantially over the years: starting from its original floor plan within the building, to the addition of a covered terrace extending outwards, it has begun encroaching a sizable portion of the common space around the *polykatoikia*, which technically belongs to all of the residents. In the days of the former manager, Ioannis explained, the rent for the enclosed space located within the structure of the building used to be around EUR 3,500 per month, with only an additional EUR 1,000 per year paid for the use of that terrace. This arrangement is still in place, but for Ioannis, this pricing is unfair. Upon observing the terrace to be far bigger than the rest of the shared space, we also found the payment to be unrepresentative of the situation. Ioannis believes that the contract that specifies the low annual rent should be terminated and that a higher rate should be fixed. He argues that the income that is lost ought to go into the shared fund for the community of owners in the *polykatoikia*. Ioannis, therefore, wants to raise the rent so that everyone benefits. If the operators of the café—friends of the former manager,

Makeshift exit into the garden made by a ground-floor resident of the *polykatoikia* in Neo Faliro

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Ioannis talking about his plans to turn the rooftop space into a community terrace

according to Ioannis—will not negotiate, he plans to remove the roof of the terrace. Though he is aware that this would create controversy, he wants to secure a common space that can be enjoyed by all, without the necessity of consumption.

The difficulty of his task becomes clear when he talks about other aspects of his work. One of the biggest obstacles he faces since taking over as the building manager has been the suspicion of the different apartment owners in the building. For example, when during the annual assembly of owners, Ioannis explained how the shared funds were going to be spent to transform the building into a more social place, he was not taken seriously. Many there, simply couldn't understand why anyone would put so much effort into the management of the building, if not other than for their own personal gain. But this is not what drives him. Neither is it charity, he says. Instead, he understands his job as something that is rooted in his sense of purpose whilst trying to keep his emotions in check, toiling through the troubles as a philosophical and artistic exercise.

Time, he says, is needed to build up trust. But it appears to be hard to gain people's acceptance for his plans—a sentiment that seems, to a certain degree, justified as Ioannis is also clear on the fact that in some 'glorious past,' the managers of *polykatoikia* received income from their work. Still, Ioannis thinks it is an important job and worth the struggle—not least because the *polykatoikia* to him are an interesting socio-economical experiment that needs special care and attention.

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